

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01

DHA-02 /064 W

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R 031615Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8514

USIA WASHDC

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 0052

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PORS SOPN EC

SUBJECT: GOE CLOSES TV FOR ONE WEEK AND ARRESTS NEWSMEN

REF: A) QUITO 8847 B) QUITO 8686 C) QUITO 8662

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:

1. THE RODRIGUEZ LARA GOVERNMENT SUSPENDED ON JAN. 2 BROADCAST BY CHANNEL 4 TV FOR ONE WEEK FOLLOWING ITS TRANSMISSION OF A JAN. 1 YEAR-END REVIEW PROGRAM WHICH FOCUSED HEAVILY ON THE SEPT. 1 COUP ATTEMPT. THE GOE HAD PREVIOUSLY BANNED ANY MENTION BY NEWS MEDIA OF THE ABORTED COUP. ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH BROADCAST OF THE PROGRAM WERE A TV EXECUTIVE AND THE PROGRAM'S MODERATOR. THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS HAS PROTESTED THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION. END SUMMARY

2. AT 8:20 P.M. ON JAN. 2, CHANNEL 4 TV ANNOUNCED IT HAD BEEN ORDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO SUSPEND TRANSMISSION AND THANKED ITS LISTENERS FOR THEIR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT. THE EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED NEWS EARLIER IN THE DAY THAT GUILLERMO LASSO, COORDINATOR OF PROGRAMS FOR CHANNEL 4, AND DIEGO OQUENDO, THE DIRECTOR OF NEWS AND MODERATOR OF THE NEWS COMMENTARY PROGRAM "23 HOURS," HAD BEEN
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ARRESTED. OQUENDO'S REVIEW OF EVENTS OF THE YEAR ON

JAN. 1 HAD FOCUSED LARGELY ON THE SEPT. 1 COUP ATTEMPT AND HAD PRESENTED FILMS OF THE ACTION AND FILMED INTERVIEWS CRITICAL OF THE RODRIGUEZ GOVERNMENT.

3. THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT ISSUED ON NOV. 26 A DECREE PROHIBITING MENTION OF THE SEPT. 1 ABORTED COUP. THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING CLOSURE OF CHANNEL 4 REFERRED TO THE STATION HAVING VIOLATED THIS BAN AND TO THE LAW GOVERNING RADIO AND TELEVISION. THE ORDER OF SUSPENSION EXECUTED BY THE POLICE AND A LETTER TO THE STATION FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE ECUADOREAN INSTITUTE FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS REFERRED TO THE LAW OF RADIO AND TELEVISION.

4. THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS ON THE EVENING OF JAN. 2 REGISTERED ITS "ENERGETIC" PROTEST OVER THE STATION'S SUSPENSION AND THE ARREST OF LASSO AND OQUENDO. THE STATEMENT SAID THE GOE ACTION VIOLATED FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION, AND THAT ANY REVIEW OF THE YEAR'S NEWS INEVITABLY HAD TO INCLUDE THE HAPPENINGS OF SEPT. 1. THE JOURNALISTS DEMANDED THE IMMEDIATE REOPENING OF CHANNEL 4 AND LIBERTY OF LASSO AND OQUENDO. EL TIEMPO ISSUED ITS OWN SIMILAR PROTEST. END UNCLASSIFIED

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL:

5. COMMENT: CHANNEL 4 TV AND EL TIEMPO ARE OWNED BY ECUADOREAN INDUSTRIALIST ANTONIO GRANDA CENTENO. GRANDA, WHO IS POWERFUL AND WEALTHY, REPRESENTS THE RIGHT-WING OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM AND HAS BEEN IN OPPOSITION TO THE RODRIGUEZ LARA GOVERNMENT. EL TIEMPO AND CHANNEL 4 HAVE BEEN THE PRINCIPAL CHANNELS FOR CIVILIAN OPPOSITION, AND THEIR NEWS COVERAGE HAS OFTEN BEEN EXAGGERATED AND AIMED AT UNDERMINING THE RODRIGUEZ LARA GOVERNMENT. THE MISSION HAS RECEIVED REPORTS ON AT LEAST TWO PREVIOUS OCCASIONS REGARDING GOE WARNINGS TO GRANADA CENTERED ABOUT EL TIEMPO AND CHANNEL 4'S CONSTANT ATTACK ON THE GOVERNMENT. OTHER NEWS MEDIA HAVE MENTIONED THE COUP SINCE THE GOE BAN, BUT NONE SO EXTENSIVELY NOR CRITICALLY OF THE GOE. IT APPEARS THAT ON JAN. 1 THE GOVERNMENT'S PATIENCE REACHED AN END. END COMMENT
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